



MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Columbia University

Course Overview

Best practices for maternal survival in Sub-Saharan Africa: A course to strengthen the capacity of non-physician clinicians including midwives

Venue: Tanzanian Training Centre for International Health, Ifakara.

Date: 18th – 31st October 2009

Background

The high rate of maternal mortality throughout sub-Saharan Africa is due in part to a critical shortage of skilled health care providers able to deliver life saving emergency obstetric care. In most of Africa, there are fewer than five doctors for every 100,000 people, and each year 20,000 health professionals leave their posts to pursue jobs in urban areas or outside of their own countries. The training and deployment of non-physician clinicians (NPCs) also known as mid-level providers (MLPs), to provide Emergency Obstetric Care (EmOC) is one part of the solution to this crisis.

Almost every country in Africa has a set of health professionals who are neither doctors nor nurses, but who provide significant clinical care even in the most remote areas. In some countries they are known as clinical officers, others call them assistant medical officers, medical licentiates, health officers or técnicos de cirugía.

This course is aimed at developing models of good practice for comprehensive EmOC among non-physician clinicians, and strengthening the innovative manner in which such health professionals, including midwives and nurse/midwives, have been utilized to reduce maternal and newborn deaths in a number of countries in Africa.

Course objectives:

- Provide opportunity for shared learning experiences across countries, between tutors and practicing NPCs and between cadres of NPCs providing EmOC
- Gain knowledge and skills update on evidence-based lifesaving clinical EmOC
- Learn methodology to ensure continued learning through the use of portfolio based learning
- Provide tools for improving quality of care (including clinical EmOC practice and facility systems to support EmOC provision) through audit and use of process indicators

- Uphold the rights and dignity of patients and providers through adoption of rights based approach to delivery of EmOC.
- Develop leadership and accountability skills and promote a team approach to providing EmOC
- Provide advocacy skills for NPCs to enhance their visibility as a crucial part of the clinical team providing maternal health care

Course Participants

- Participants will be drawn from four countries: Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia – up to 11 participants from each country.
- Participants will include Midwives, Assistant Medical Officers (Tanzania), Clinical Officers (Malawi), Medical Licentiates (Zambia) and Health Officers (Ethiopia), who are directly engaged in the delivery of Emergency Obstetric Care as well as Tutors/ Lecturers involved in training these categories of healthcare workers.
- Participants will be selected based on individual applications, from hospitals identified by Ministries of Health as priority hospitals for strengthening Emergency Obstetric Care. Priority will be given to teams of two (e.g. one AMO and a midwife from the same hospital).
- All course costs will be assumed by the course organizers.

Course Content

This course marks the first time that teams of non-physician clinicians from four countries, Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia, will be brought together in Tanzania for a two week intensive residential course. The course is structured to provide not only a clinical update, but also to focus on quality of care leading to good practice. It is an opportunity for countries to share experiences and for participants to develop their clinical and analytic skills. Participants will leave this course with better tools to improve maternal health; enhanced skills in advocacy, network building and teamwork; and a focus on clinical care through a human rights perspective thus building a model for best practice for maternal survival.

The course will begin with topic overviews on issues related to maternal mortality, poverty, and the human rights perspective. The clinical portion of the course will provide a knowledge and skills update on evidence based best practice relating to emergency obstetric care, including management of prolonged labor, complications of abortion, hemorrhage, eclampsia and pre-eclampsia, neonatal asphyxia, and intensive care. A variety of teaching methodologies will be used, including presentation of scenarios, case simulations, practical opportunities at the hospital, clinical skills laboratory, videos, and lectures.

Participants will have the opportunity to share information interactively. Teams from each country will present comparative data from their home facilities, followed by a discussion of the presentations among all course participants.

The course as a whole will emphasize quality improvement in several areas, including problem identification and solution development, the audit cycle, action planning, and monitoring and evaluation. Working with the participants, course leaders will identify participant's learning needs and will provide strategies for portfolio-based learning and communication for continuous learning.

Pre-course and Post-course Activities

In addition to the two week residential program at the **Tanzanian Training Centre for International Health, Ifakara**, participants selected to attend the course will be required to engage in pre-and post-course activities designed to strengthen delivery of quality EmOC in their health facilities. Pre-course activities include collection of the number of fresh and macerated stillbirths occurring in a given period in their facilities as well service related statistics to be identified by the course organizers. Participants will develop action plans to improve the quality of EmOC service delivery in their particular health facilities. These plans will form the basis for the post-course activities, during which time identified course mentors will visit participants and provide technical support to implement these plans.

Training venue

Tanzanian Training Centre for International Health (TTCIH), Ifakara is a non profit autonomous institution that offers short international courses in health and a long course to train Assistant Medical Officers. The institution works as a part of an integrated triangular cluster with *Ifakara Health Institute (IHI)* and *St Francis Designated District Hospital*. The research, on-the-ground experience and pedagogical, and technological materials of this cluster as related to human resource development will frame the overall design and implementation of the course.

The Averting Maternal Death and Disability Program (AMDD)

The Averting Maternal Death and Disability Program (AMDD) at the Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University is a global program of research, advocacy, policy analysis, and technical support dedicated to the reduction of maternal mortality. AMDD's current focus is on addressing human resources needs and strengthening health systems. Through development of this course, AMDD hopes to help create solutions to the human resources crisis in health systems in Sub-Saharan Africa by enhancing the abilities of non-physician clinicians to provide emergency obstetric care, thereby improving maternal morbidity and mortality. AMDD brings together people with considerable experiences in international health and human rights, health systems strengthening, reproductive health, and the use of non-physician clinicians to address human resources challenges in health.

Funding for this course is through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark.